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New York Was Site of Secret CIA-Army Biological War Tests

Special to FREEDOM

Part I

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The Central Intelligence Agency conducted five consecutive days of covert biological warfare experiments in the New York City area in 1956 with the cooperation of U.S. Army personnel.

This and other previously unknown biological tests were discovered during a four month investigation of CIA documents previously released under the Freedom of Information Act. The following is the first part of what researchers for American Citizens for Honesty in Government, an arm of the Church of Scientology, discovered. —Editor.

For six consecutive days in 1950, a U.S. Navy ship cruised off the coast of San Francisco, exposing over 800,000 people in the Bay Area to a daily cloud of bacteria.

Shortly after the tests, doctors south of San Francisco noted an unusual incidence of pneumonia among some of their Palo Alto patients, one of whom subsequently died.

When the first story about the San Francisco test was exposed, a grandson of the Palo Alto fatality recalled an article about the unusual pneumonia outbreak. Linking the medical findings with what was known about the test, Edward Nevin brought suit against the Army for the death of his grandfather. The matter is currently before the courts.

Other instances of open-air tests on American cities have been cited but little is known. According to a list provided a Senate subcommittee in 1977, over a dozen U.S. cities were the targets of "harmless" biological agents.

One of the more bizarre occurred in 1966, when germ-laden light bulbs were dropped in a New York City subway to test the effects of a covert bacteriological attack. It is not known what health hazards ensued. No reports of the test were ever released.

According to a Senate report, the Army's Special Operations Division (SOD) conducted the vulnerability tests against selected sites. However, the report notes, similar "CIA projects were distinct [from the Army's] because they involved the mating of delivery systems to lethal or incapacitating biological agents."

MKNAOMI

In 1952, a secret agreement was reached between the CIA and the SOD at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The SOD was to assist the CIA in secretly developing, testing, and maintaining biological agents and delivery systems. The CIA code named the cooperative effort "MKNAOMI."

According to a 1975 report of the Senate Intelligence Committee, it is "fair to conclude from the types of weapons developed for the CIA, and from the extreme security associated with MKNAOMI, that the possibility of first use of biological weapons by the CIA was contemplated."

The SOD also researched "the possibilities of large-scale covert use of biological weapons." But, "so far as the Committee was able to determine," the capability was "never tapped by Army or CIA."

However, CIA documents unraveled by American Citizens for Honesty in Government (ACHG) now point to a five-day covert experiment against the New York City area in 1956, using a yet-

The material was found in a previously released CIA file. Among the most heavily censored of any released by the Agency under the Freedom of Information Act, the material consists almost entirely of receipts of activities and purchases made with CIA funds. According to a May 12, 1955 memo found in the file, the money was being spent to support CIA activities being carried out with a unit at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

The receipts stem from a petty cash fund used by the CIA-Army team. Some receipts are marked "emergency" to indicate that such goods could not be procured quickly enough with the regular fund, and the petty cash float, which averaged only a few hundred dollars, had to be relied upon.

Thus, in addition to severe censorship of the receipts, ACHG was also faced with the prospect that the file was only a partial reflection of the cash transactions and provided an incomplete picture of the CIA-Army experiments.

CIA censors had sought to delete every reference that could identify the location of the test team. In some cases, the names of firms that had printed the actual receipt form had been struck out by overzealous censors.

However, New York City was identified as the hub of the 1956 test through a \$1.50 receipt for an "Observatory fee, empire state" (sic) for "weather data" during the five day test.

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